

Message Text

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SUBJECT: PAA BERLIN - LONDON CHARTERS

REF: BONN 20575

1. BERLIN-LONDON CHARTER PROBLEM TOOK ON NEW URGENCY ON DEC. 19 WHEN BERLIN TRAVEL AGENT UNGER WENT TO THE PRESS TO REPORT THAT CLOSE TO 900 BERLIN VACATIONERS WOULD BE STRANDED IN LONDON THE FIRST FEW DAYS IN JANUARY BECAUSE OF RESTRICTIVE ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE UKG. AS FAR AS WE COULD DETERMINE FROM PAA, THE IMMEDIATE PROBLEM AROSE BECAUSE WHILE PAA CHARTERS WERE THINNED APPRECIABLY DURING THE MONTH OF DECEMBER, LAKER HAS CONTINUED TO CARRY PASSENGERS TO LONDON IN LARGE NUMBERS FOR RATHER LONGER PERIODS THAN WERE ORIGINALLY INDICATED ON ITS APPLICATIONS. UNGER HAD EXPECTED TO BE ABLE TO RETURN THESE PASSENGERS (WHO HAD BUNCHED UP IN THE UK) TO BERLIN WITH THE COMBINED CAPACITY HE WOULD HAVE DURING THE FIRST FEW DAYS OF JANUARY FROM BOTH PAA AND LAKER.

2. WITH THE ELIMINATION OF PAA'S JANUARY PROGRAM AND
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THE LACK OF ANY SPARE CAPACITY FROM LAKER AND DANAIR

DURING THE HOLIDAY SEASON, THE AGENT HAS GOTTEN HIMSELF INTO A BIND. HE HAS THEREFORE ASKED IF PAA OR BA COULD BRING THE PASSENGERS BACK ON THEIR SCHEDULED SERVICES. BA HAS NO SPARE CAPACITY, AND PAA SAID THEY WOULD HAVE TO SEEK WAIVERS FROM BOTH THE BRITISH AND AMERICAN GOVERNMENTS TO MOVE THESE PASSENGERS AT REDUCED FARES. ACCORDING TO PAA OPERATIONS PERSONNEL, PAA'S LONDON OFFICE - ON THE ADVICE OF THE COMPANY'S WASHINGTON ATTORNEY - HAS DECIDED NOT TO SUBMIT PAA APPLICATIONS FOR JANUARY, INCLUDING THOSE FOR THE FIRST PART OF THE MONTH, WHICH COULD HAVE TO CARRY BACK SOME OF THE STRANDED PASSENGERS. THIS DECISION IS APPARENTLY BASED ON A DESIRE NOT TO FURTHER PROVOKE THE DOT.

3. WE INFORMED BRITISH EMBASSY POLITICAL OFFICER HITCH OF THE PROBLEM FRIDAY EVENING, POINTING OUT THE OBVIOUS REQUIREMENT FOR CONTINUED PAA CHARTERS TO LONDON, AND SERIOUS PUBLIC RELATIONS PROBLEM ARISING FOR THE BRITISH AND THE ALLIES IF ANY BERLIN PASSENGERS WERE STRANDED IN LONDON. HITCH SAW OUR POINT, AND SAID HE WAS DISPATCHING AN URGENT MESSAGE TO LONDON RECOMMENDING THAT BRITISH AUTHORITIES FOCUS ON THE SITUATION IMMEDIATELY. HITCH GAVE US THE IMPRESSION, LATER CONFIRMED BY BRITISH MINISTER BULLARD, THAT THE EMBASSY WAS VERY CONCERNED BY THE TURN THE SITUATION HAD TAKEN, PARTICULARLY AS REGARDS A THOUGHTFUL EDITORIAL IN THE TAGESSPIEGEL, POINTING OUT THAT PROTECTIONIST POLICIES BY THE ALLIES IN THE BERLIN CIVIL AIR FIELD WERE PLAYING INTO THE HANDS OF THE GDR IN ITS EFFORTS TO BOOST THE USE OF SCHOENEFELD. HITCH SAID HE WOULD BE IN TOUCH TO DISCUSS THE MATTER FURTHER AS SOON AS HE HAD A RESPONSE FROM LONDON.

4. COMMENT: THIS LATEST DEVELOPMENT AND THE ATTENDANT PRESS COVERAGE HAS CLEARLY DEEPENED BRITISH CONCERNS HERE AS TO THE POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESTRICTIVE POSTURE ASSUMED BY LONDON ON PAA CHARTERS. WE WOULD THINK THAT ANOTHER DEMARCHE IN WASHINGTON AT AN INTERMEDIATE LEVEL, POINTING TO THE IMPLICATIONS OF STRANDING BERLINERS IN THE UK AS EVIDENCE THAT THE BRITISH LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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POSITION IS HARMFUL TO OVERALL ALLIED INTERESTS, MIGHT BE USEFUL IN EXPLOITING THE PRESENT SITUATION. IF THE UKG REFUSES TO ALTER ITS POSITION IN A MANNER GIVING PAA CONTINUING ACCESS TO THE BERLIN-LONDON CHARTER MARKET WE WOULD THINK A HIGHER LEVEL APPROACH IN WASHINGTON WOULD BE WARRANTED. AT THAT POINT WE WOULD ALSO CONSIDER MAKING A PARALLEL APPROACH TO THE FRENCH ON BERLIN-PARIS CHARTERS.

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